



North Dakota Small Organized Schools

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HB-1507

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Testimony in Opposition

Michael Heilman – Executive Director North Dakota Small Organized School

November 8, 2021

Chairman and members of the Joint Technical Corrections Committee, my name is Michael Heilman. I am the Executive Director of the North Dakota Small Organized Schools (NDSOS). I represent 155-member school districts of the North Dakota Small Organized Schools. NDSOS stands in opposition to HB 1507 as it is currently written.

The concerns with this bill are many. First and foremost, changing of graduation requirements is a conversation well worth having, but it should be done when there is time to engage the education leaders, school boards and students from across the state. Changes in graduation requirements can have significant impact on school staffing and budgets. Large districts will need to offer multiple sections of the newly proposed course and smaller schools, who find staffing in math and science nearly impossible, will scramble to find qualified staff.

Changes to graduation requirements impact student choice. That is not to say that graduation requirements are not needed, certainly there is knowledge that is universal and needed by all. However, we also need to respect that our students' interests are diverse, and North Dakota's comprehensive high schools attempt to meet that diversity by offering the required courses as defined in Century Code and a comprehensive selection of electives. Changing graduation requirements can have a profound impact on course offering and student's ability to choose. Every additional requirement (18 when I graduated, 22 currently) reduces student choice and may actually create situations where students are less choice ready upon graduation. If a student's interest is in Cyber Security, great they should have that choice, but if it is not their area of interest, why should they be forced to lose out on an area of their choosing.

As stated earlier, NDSOS believes this is a conversation worth having, but at a time when it can be properly vetted by engaging all the stakeholders. NDSOS stands opposed to this legislation being enacted at this time. Thank you Chairman and members of the Joint Technical Corrections Committee.

Mr. Michael Heilman – Executive Director

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The mission of NDSOS is to provide leadership for the small/rural schools in North Dakota and to support legislation favorable to their philosophy while opposing legislation that is harmful.